

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

Maine Partnerships Receive \$150,000 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$150,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for **three projects in Maine**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wetland-associated wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

The Carney Island and the Causeway Intertidal Basin Project

Located in **Hancock County in Congressional District 1**, Carney Island and the causeway between Little Deer Isle and Deer Isle create a 29-acre intertidal basin. This shallow basin, consisting of submerged and intertidal aquatic vegetation, rocky shore, and unconsolidated mudflats, provides rich habitat for **Atlantic Flyway** wintering waterfowl such as American black duck, common eider, red-breasted merganser, and black, white-winged, and surf scoters. Numerous migratory shorebird species, including American oystercatcher, black-bellied plover, and buff-breasted and purple sandpipers, also make their way to the project area. Bald eagles and osprey that commonly nest on or near Carney Island feed at the basin. And, as if these weren't indicators enough of the habitat's value, it also serves as a nursery area for several species of economically important fish, for example, white flounder and blueback herring, and shellfish.

The northern three-fifths of Carney Island, as well as a 1.5-acre parcel on Little Deer Isle, are listed for sale by a developer. Throughout Maine's middle coastal area, increasing numbers of potential summer residents are intensifying pressure to develop the remaining portions of open coastline.

With the help of a **\$50,000** grant, together with **\$156,400** in matching funds, partners Island Heritage Trust, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and New England Natural Areas and Wildlife Grants Program will purchase the Carney Island offering and the Little Deer Isle parcel, permanently protecting them from imminent development. More than 4,300 feet of shoreline, 17 acres of undeveloped upland, and 29 acres of associated intertidal basin will be conserved for future generations of both wildlife and humans to enjoy. This project also advances the habitat goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Ann Hooke, Island Heritage Trust, ihtwo@prexar.com, (207) 348-2455, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.

Killick Pond Conservation Area – Gannett Tract Project

Found in **York County in Congressional District 1**, the Gannett Tract contains stream shore ecosystems, red maple swamp, and the northernmost stand of pitch pine/scrub oak barren in New England. The bulk of Maine's

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historical pitch pine/scrub oak barrens have long since been converted to residential or agricultural lands. The Gannett Tract's substantial road frontage (7,189 feet) and water frontage (3,200 feet on Killick Pond and Killick Brook) are ideal for development. However, the tract's development value is exceeded by its wildlife value. Using geographic information systems databases, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) analysis predicts that the tract provides habitat for 34 of the 91 trust species of concern to the Service in the Gulf of Maine watershed: among them, American black duck, red-shouldered hawk, American woodcock, Baltimore oriole, and golden-winged warbler. Animals found on the tract that are designated as rare by the State include northern black racer, ribbon snake, eastern box turtle, and several pine barrens-associated moths.

The 107-acre tract is an inholding in Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's (Department) Killick Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Using the **\$50,000** grant, plus **\$270,000** in matching funds, The Nature Conservancy-Maine Chapter will purchase the parcel and transfer title to the Department. Lands adjacent to the WMA belong to Maine Army National Guard and Poland Spring Water Company. The water company is restoring grassland habitat on its property. Together, these lands create more than 3,550 acres of contiguous habitat, protecting one of the largest remaining areas of open space in southern Maine and contributing to the conservation goals of the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact William Brune, The Nature Conservancy-Maine Chapter, wbrune@tnc.org, (207) 729-5181, Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.

Day's Marsh Acquisition Project

Day's Marsh, located in **Lincoln County** in **Congressional District 1**, features a domed bog peatland with a dwarf shrub community (a wetland type uncommon in Maine), open water, and an upland buffer of coniferous and deciduous woodlands. When the property was offered for sale, the Damariscotta River Association (Association) approached the owner, who agreed to sell to the Association, provided the closing could occur by the end of 2004; otherwise, it would be listed again. Based on development occurring on similar properties nearby, the threat was clear. Because the marsh is the headwaters of the Marsh River, which drains into a tidal estuarine system associated with the Sheepscot River, one of Maine's seven Atlantic salmon rivers, the need to protect it from development was obvious.

The marsh's value to other wildlife has been analyzed and documented by the Service using geographic systems databases. Day's Marsh provides suitable habitat for 23 trust species of concern to the Service. And, of these, it provides particularly high-value habitat for 20 species. **Atlantic Flyway** Waterfowl such as American black duck, hooded merganser, mallard, and wood duck have been spotted on the property, and sora and Virginia rail have been seen skulking through the marsh in search of a meal. American bittern, swamp sparrow, and red-necked grebe are among other species known to use the parcel's habitat.

The 68-acre marsh is a piece of a puzzle being put together by the Association to preserve the natural, cultural, and historic heritage of the Damariscotta River watershed. The Association will use its **\$50,000** grant and **\$73,300** in matching funds to acquire the marsh, permanently protecting an uncommon natural community and the diversity of wildlife it supports. Under the Association's management of the marsh, public access will be allowed for recreational pursuits, like birding. During the development of this project, a side effect occurred: a neighboring landowner indicated a willingness to donate a conservation easement on his property, a multiplying factor that, with others joining, will eventually lead to a network of lands being protected in both the Sheepscot and Damariscotta watersheds. The partnership's work also will contribute to the goals of the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Steven B. Hufnagel, Damariscotta River Association, steven@dractl.org, (207) 563-1393, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.